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THE PITTSBURGH CO-OPERATIVE PLAN

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There are many so-called co-operative plans. A genuine part-time course is well illustrated by Cincinnati's co-operative plan organized in 1906, by the Fitchburg part-time plan organized in 1908, and by modifications of these used in other cities. This type of course is capable of being adapted in such a large variety of ways that it will ultimately be adopted by many schools. Almost any school could introduce a part-time co-operative system wherever two boys could be "paired" and one employer could be found who would take them alternately.

Most of the part-time co-operative schools have been organized to co-operate with the industries of the respective communities. There are many advantages to the employer, to the pupils, and to the schools. The employer will secure a higher class of workmen. That his motive is selfish makes it no less commendable. The boys, by being in school part of the time, will be able to get more individual instruction in the theory of the trade and probably by better teachers than the boys who spend their entire time in the shop.

Many a pupil will derive more profit from both work and school than if he were doing either singly. Since a dominant characteristic of the adolescent is a desire for creative or constructive activity, he will take a deep interest in the work. Likewise he will go to school regularly and with more earnest purpose in order that he may get as much help as possible for his work, because he sees for the first time a real connection between school and life.

The plan is economical for the community. In the Centralia Township (Illinois) School the pupils on the part-time plan use machine-shops that cost the Illinois Central Railroad over \$500,000. The cost of the upkeep and of the replacement of this equipment, as soon as it becomes obsolete, is met without any expense to the township. The boys like the atmosphere of the real shop. In addition the remuneration gives *all* a feeling of independence that is worthy of encouragement and enables some to continue in school who otherwise would be obliged to leave school to assist in bearing the expenses of the family.

The part-time plan of education will meet the demands of the 50 per cent of the children of the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades who desert the school early. They often feel neglected and become discouraged in the all-time school because it is frequently based upon a plan of work for groups. These discouraged pupils must have their individual needs considered, as is more often done in planning courses of study for the evening and part-time schools. However, the evening school, popular and desirable as it is, is often too great a physical tax upon the vitality of the growing youth.

While most co-operative schools are linked up with shops, the co-operative, or part-time, plan has been successful with commercial subjects in a few schools. Last February the Peabody and Fifth Avenue high schools in Pittsburgh put the pupils of their commercial courses on half-time during the last semester of the Senior year. The pupils were "paired" and sent on alternate weeks to certain of Pittsburgh's representative firms. These firms, the Joseph Horne Company, the Pittsburgh Coal Company, the Equitable Insurance Company, and the H. J. Heinz Company, were carefully selected that the pupils might not be exploited. The pupils worked with the same firms during the entire semester. At a meeting of the managers of these firms before the plan was

put into operation, a uniform scale of wages of seven dollars per week was agreed upon. As has been stated, the firms selected to inaugurate this plan in Pittsburgh were those which we knew had sufficient civic spirit and vision to do everything to assist these boys and girls to get as much and as varied training as possible from the different kinds of work; that is, the pupils were not kept at one kind of work for the entire period. The pupils sent to the Joseph Horne Company, one of our large department stores, were given opportunities to work behind the counters in selling real merchandise to real customers as well as to write real letters, and to handle checks that had face value. This vitalized the study of salesmanship, stenography, and bookkeeping.

One of the surprising and gratifying results was that practically the same amount of school work was completed as in former years, although these pupils do not recite with the full-time classes. Each high school had an entire section of the graduating class using this plan. During the present semester, when the stores do not open until ten o'clock, pupils from the Fifth Avenue High School were at school during the forenoon and reported to the store at one o'clock. As a rule, the firms prefer to have the pupils on the alternate-week plan rather than the half-day plan.

Some new problems of administration must be met. There must be co-operation between the school and office in order to arrange about wages and time, to secure records of pupils' work, and to correct any deficiencies that are revealed by this practical work. By the shifting of teachers on alternate weeks from one building to another according to the shift of pupils, instructional energy might be saved.

No better laboratory could be furnished than actual office work. Pupils see that the rules of school, often regarded as arbitrary, are the rules that are observed in the business offices. They are impressed, as the school could never impress

them, with the importance of accuracy, of speed, of regularity, of punctuality, of seriousness, and of many other requirements of the business world. Each week many suggestions helpful to the teacher are brought back by the pupils. Teaching pupils who on alternate weeks are in touch with newest methods in the various offices prevents most any teacher from falling into a rut or growing stale in his subject.

That the part-time school does appeal to the class of pupils who drop out of school is also proved by the fact that the field secretary of the department of vocational guidance and his assistant, with an office next door to the office where working certificates are issued, were able in two months to turn one hundred "drop-outs" back into the part-time course; and this, too, after the disgruntled boy or discouraged girl had obtained a certificate from the principal of the school and a promise of a position in an office, store, or shop.

The American Locomotive Company of Pittsburgh, recognizing the need of better-trained men for the skilled industries, has agreed to a plan that will present to high-school entrants not only a high-school education and self-support after the first year, but also a definite objective in terms of a skilled trade, journeymanship, and journeymen's wages. The plan is organized on a five-year basis. The entire first year will be spent in the high school, the second, third, and fourth years on an alternate-week basis, and the entire fifth year in the plant. The entire vacation may be spent in the shop. Upon completion of the fifth year, if the work has been satisfactory, diplomas will be granted by the Board of Public Education and a certificate by the industrial plant.

Co-operative plans in one form or another are used in widely separated sections. The usual plan is for the principal, teacher, or vocational counselor to find a place where pupils may work part of the time while going to school. The school

and the employer co-operate to solve or adjust each problem as it presents itself. In many schools in which the co-operative plan has been tried there has been no individual or group of individuals who makes a scientific study of the problem as a whole. Department stores all over the country realize that they do not get enough of the kind of people in the selling or non-selling positions who can be promoted to the executive positions. These higher places are often filled by people who have been taken from some other line of work in which their executive ability has attracted attention.

Last May representatives from the largest department stores of Pittsburgh met with representatives from Carnegie Institute of Technology, from the Board of Public Education, and from the administrative department of the public schools; seven of these agreed to support a Research Bureau for Retail Training. Three aims are kept in view: (1) to give professional training to those planning to enter the field of retailing and to those who desire to become more efficient in the field; (2) to train special teachers and supervisors in this field; (3) to conduct investigations for the improvement of methods of selecting, training, and supervising employees in retail stores. In other words, the broad purpose is to encourage a more professional spirit in the field of retailing.

When this opportunity for the boys and girls of Pittsburgh was first proposed, many teachers and citizens said: "You surely are not going to encourage the graduates of your high schools to enter the department stores, are you?" Here crops out the conservatism of the teaching profession toward educational matters. Every subject when first introduced into the course of study has encountered bitter opposition from teachers. Some of us remember when teachers resented the introduction of United States history into the course of study. Many teachers of the classics even today look askance at teachers

and pupils who dare make any claim for the sciences. We all know the battle that the so-called industrial subjects have waged, and are waging, in many communities.

Many do not realize that the retail store demands the very highest ability in its many different kinds of activities. Those interested in vocational guidance may not realize that probably no other employer can offer positions requiring such varied ability as does the department store. We are likely to think that the selling positions are practically the only kind of work in these stores; we do not know that there is an equal number of persons in the non-selling positions doing the important work essential to keep the organization efficient. The department store is a small city in itself.

In one of the department stores in Pittsburgh there are over one hundred persons who receive \$4,000 or more per year. The great demand for more intelligent men and women in the selling and administrative departments caused these business houses to ask aid from the practical psychologists. As a result of serious study of the situation, the seven retail department stores of the league have agreed to contribute \$32,000 a year, or a total of \$160,000 for five years, to study the educational problems of the entire system from the humblest employee through to the highest official. This will bring over into the field of retailing the results of the study of personnel problems which have been attained by the original Bureau of Salesmanship Research at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. It will utilize the work of the men of this bureau in connection with the personnel organization of the American army.

The most important new feature of the work is the attempt to make a thorough, scientific study of the methods of selecting, training, and supervising employees in both the selling and the non-selling forces of the department stores. In October a training course for workers in the employment, educational, and service departments of large stores was

begun. A generous number of 500-dollar scholarships and fellowships were given to able college graduates selected by the staff. On this staff are its director, Dr. J. B. Miner, who during the war has also been acting head of the Division of Applied Psychology; Dr. G. M. Whipple, an expert in experimental education, as consultant; together with Mr. W. R. Skillen, an expert in department-store work from Wanamaker's Philadelphia store; Miss Marion L. Norris, Marshall Field & Company and Charles A. Stevens & Brothers, of Chicago; Miss Elizabeth Dyer, expert on salesmanship courses, formerly assistant director of the Prince School of Store Service in Boston and, later, educational director at Rike-Kumler Company, Dayton; and Dr. David R. Sumstine, principal of one of Pittsburgh's high schools, consultant in regard to high-school courses of study.

Does not this show to what extent these business men believe in training? When they are willing to back up their convictions with their money, it certainly behooves those of us who are interested in education and in educational experiments to co-operate to the fullest extent.

Any pupil of the seventh or eighth grade who has been accepted by any of the co-operating stores may enter this school. Any pupil who has completed the eighth grade may enrol in the co-operative course in high school. The pupils who enrol will attend school in alternate weeks. The state authorities have decided that children of the part-time school should have a vacation-work certificate. If there are not enough pupils in any high school for the co-operative retail course, those who wish to pursue this course will be cared for at a downtown class until there are enough for any school to be provided for at that school.

The course of study for the non-office work has been planned for the first year by a group of five high-school teachers and the staff of the Retail Bureau. The subjects are English, arithmetic, general science, color and design, and store organi-

zation and practices—all related to the needs of the retail store. The course for the second year will include subjects technical enough not to duplicate the present courses in high school, and broadening courses related to life: life-problems, the technique of selling, and merchandise.

The aims for the course of study for the high school will include: (1) the use in certain high-school subjects of material with which the pupils in the retailing course would naturally have to deal in their business relations; (2) some technical work related directly to the stores, as indicated by the subject of store organization; (3) a very definite attempt to keep a broad vision for the pupils by relating these business courses to the fundamental, moral, scientific, and artistic conceptions in life.

The pupils will receive a compensation for the days spent in the store. Caution has been taken that the pay for the part-time work may not be so high as to make the plan too attractive financially to school children. The thought back of the business and professional men is that for the children this is an educational, not a financial, project. In fact, some of our best technical schools are now requiring actual experience in industrial life before graduation. Dean Schneider acts on the principle that theoretical instruction given to the students should be employed to illuminate, supplement, and interpret real shop or other practical experience. Mr. Miles, of Wisconsin, says that in some cities the employers pay the boys on part time as much as they do the boys who work all the time. They say that boys who are going to school do twice as much work in the same time as boys who are not in school. Too many of our boys stop growing intellectually before they have stopped growing physically.

In order to call attention to the advantages of this co-operative plan to the parents and children, the co-operating stores inclosed with the December statements a circular which

set forth the principal features of the course. Parents and pupils were urged to make further inquiry about the course.

Most of the inquiries received in response to these circulars may be grouped under one or more of the following questions:

I. What are the advantages of a part-time vocational educational plan?

II. For what young people is the part-time plan of vocational education particularly valuable?

III. How is the co-operative arrangement between the Pittsburgh public schools and the large department stores administered?

In a pamphlet prepared by Associate Superintendent Frank M. Leavitt and published by the Board of Public Education these three questions are fully answered as follows:

I

The advantages of a part-time vocational education to the young person who follows this plan are as follows:

a) Not only does the young person secure a good position with promise of future promotion, but he receives training for the work which he is doing. A part of this training is given in the place where he is employed and a part of it is given in the public school.

b) Whether at school or at work the young person is under the care and supervision of the public educational authorities.

c) The young person may begin to contribute to his own support while he is still in school securing an education.

d) To many pupils the practical work serves to explain the school work and to make it seem more vital and more important. In some cases pupils who fail to appreciate the educational opportunities offered by the regular full-time school work become at once faithful and diligent students on entering the part-time class.

e) The plan will start the young worker in the right way by showing him that it is worth while to study the occupation in which he is engaged and that such a study of the opportunities of the vocation will certainly advance him in his life-work. Few people are making substantial progress in their daily occupations who are not studying in some way to improve themselves and their work.

f) Boys and girls will have an opportunity to find themselves—a means of vocational guidance.

It will thus be seen that the part-time co-operative plan of vocational education offers many advantages over full-time work and even over full-time education for some young people.

II

The part-time plan is particularly valuable for two groups of pupils:

First, there is that large group dropping out of school each year. In the city of Pittsburgh during the school year of 1917-18 between September 1 and April 30, 598 children left the public high schools alone, dropping out from first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year classes without completing the course of study. During this same interval 870 pupils between fourteen and sixteen took out working certificates from the seventh and eighth grades of our public schools. Practically all of these young people would have received great benefit if they could have continued their education on a half-time plan.

Second, there are many young people now in the high schools who have no intention of going to college and no clear idea why they are going to school. Some of these young people are not succeeding entirely with their school work largely because they do not apply themselves with the energy which should be shown by young people of high-school age. It is actually harmful for such boys and girls to loiter through high school putting forth only half of their natural powers. Part-time education for many such children will improve their school work immensely.

What are the educational qualifications for the various divisions in these stores? The co-operating stores reported to the Research Bureau the amount of schooling of their present employees. In all the stores 77 per cent of the employees under twenty-three years of age have never been in high school; the number varies from 69 per cent to 82 per cent. Forty-four per cent, or nearly one-half, left school during, or at the close of, the eighth grade.

At the same time the stores gave this information they also reported the probable number of pupils who can be taken into the store on the part-time plan. One store reported that 446 pupils could be placed as follows: first year of high school, 67 girls and 42 boys; second year, 58 girls and 23 boys; third year, 66 girls and 56 boys; fourth year, 39 girls and 24 boys; 375 altogether, or 85 per cent, from the high-school grades.

At present only 22 per cent of employees of this store under twenty-three years of age have been in high school, and 85 per cent of these did not enter the third year. Statistics in this case, show the opportunities open to our high-school pupils on the part-time plan.

III

Any pupil of the Pittsburgh Public School who enters upon part-time work in one of the co-operating department stores is under the immediate care and supervision of the public-school authorities. The progress of his work both in the school and in the store is a matter of school interest and school record, as are also his health, his attendance, and his deportment.

In addition to the supervision by the public-school authorities, the young people will be observed and supervised, and to some extent instructed, through the work of the Research Bureau for Retail Training. This bureau employs a professional staff and conducts, in connection with the Carnegie Institute of Technology, a class in the study of the problems of retail business and especially the problem of training department-store employees. These college students are in constant contact with the part-time pupils from the public schools. The Research Bureau affords a group of specialists which will constantly observe and improve the entire plan. One of the main difficulties with the co-operative courses in other cities has been its lack of such a body constantly to watch and direct the plan.

Briefly stated, the Research Bureau for Retail Training, backed by seven stores for \$160,000 and by the facilities and equipment of the Institute of Technology, has five years in which to experiment with the co-operative plan under the auspices of the public schools; many part-time plans have lagged in other cities because there was not a sufficient number of co-operating employers; under our plan there is a greater demand for part-time pupils than the schools can supply, 1,700 altogether; the pupils will have expert supervision both in the selling and in non-selling positions; the conditions of employment will be made as favorable as possible to the educational growth of the pupils; the children will be on an advancing scale of wages during their course according to grade in school and years in service (this will show, in a con-

crete manner, that an additional year of schooling means a higher wage); pupils and parents will take more interest in an education that links up intimately and immediately with actual work; many pupils will be able to remain in school on account of financial aid received for the weeks spent in the stores; meeting prospective customers and mingling with all classes of people will give a real basis for the study of salesmanship and other subjects taught in their classes; the retail store will be a real laboratory equipped with people, material, and actual conditions such as could obtain in no school; since liberal scholarships are offered by the bureau, many college and advanced students will come to the Carnegie Institute of Technology to fit themselves for welfare work, for teaching in the high school, and for supervising or directing the selling and non-selling force in large establishments; the research fellowships will be awarded to college graduates who have the proper preparation for undertaking an investigation of the selling and the non-selling activities. (The first study will be to find out the best method of selecting, training, and promoting those in inspector-wrapper work. It is being carried on by the staff with the assistance of the research group of students and in consultation with the executives in the stores.)

Under this co-operative plan boys and girls will all have equal opportunity to advance as far as their ability, energy, and character will permit.